

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 16, 2022

The Honorable Denis McDonough
Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary McDonough:

We write to express our concern with the recent proposal by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) that, if implemented, would potentially result in the closure of the Castle Point VA Medical Center. As the VA continues its review of health facilities under the MISSION Act, you must ensure that any veteran who utilizes the Castle Point Medical Center as a primary point of care maintains equally obtainable and high-quality care through a VA facility in the Hudson Valley.

The VA MISSION Act (Public Law 115-182) established a commission to make recommendations regarding the modernization and/or realignment of facilities of the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). While the Asset and Infrastructure Review (AIR) Commission will have an opportunity to evaluate the VA's proposed changes, it is imperative that any recommendation the AIR Commission receives does not include a reduction of services for the veterans in our districts. Many veterans are dependent on the care they receive from the VHA, and the VA must not compromise that care by closing any facilities without sufficient and equally accessible replacement of services.

Closing the Castle Point VA Health Center without an operational replacement facility in the nearby area would be an unacceptable proposal for our veterans. A recent VA-led briefing for Congressional staff referred to a new facility in Fishkill, NY, but the recommendations published about the future of the VISN 02 Metro New York Market do not clearly identify how the services would be replaced by the new facility.

Without assurances that a new VA facility in Fishkill or an adjacent community would fully replace the services offered at Castle Point, we have serious concerns that local veterans could face an interruption to their care. As representatives for veterans in the Hudson Valley and surrounding regions, please respond with whether the VA has plans to construct a new facility in the Hudson Valley and the surrounding area, whether such a facility would match or exceed the services provided at Castle Point, and whether this facility and its full complement of services will be included in the VA's recommendations.

While we support the goals of the MISSION Act to update health care facilities and improve the care given to veterans, especially those in rural areas who often rely on limited access, we will not support any plan that involves closing a VA facility without an assurance that veterans will have equally accessible services of the same or higher quality. As the VA, the AIR Commission,

the President, and ultimately Congress continues to review VA facilities and assess needed changes, we urge you to take a tailored approach that ensures broad agreement from veterans, medical experts, and the communities most-affected by any change.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your dedication to serving our veterans after they have served our country. If you have any questions, please contact Julianne Aldous at julianne.aldous@mail.house.gov in Congressman Sean Patrick Maloney's office. Thank you for your consideration of this request and we look forward receiving a response by April 28, 2022.

Sincerely,



Sean Patrick Maloney
Member of Congress



Antonio Delgado
Member of Congress